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To the Battles of Franklin and Nashville and Beyond: Stabilization and Reconstruction in Tennessee and Kentucky, 1864-1866

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Review

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Cooling, Benjamin Franklin *To the Battles of Franklin and Nashville and Beyond: Stabilization and Reconstruction in Tennessee and Kentucky, 1864-1866*. University of Tennessee Press, \$45.95 ISBN 978-1-57233-751-0

Examining the Transition to Peace in Tennessee and Kentucky

In this latest of three volumes, Benjamin Franklin Cooling continues his series examining the effects of the American Civil War on Kentucky and Tennessee. Cooling builds on his earlier work, *Forts Henry and Donelson—The Key to the Confederate Heartland* (1988) and *Fort Donelson's Legacy: War and Society in Kentucky and Tennessee, 1862-1863* (1997), by carrying his analysis from 1864 to the end of the war and the opening months of the immediate postwar period. In his study the author scrutinizes the progression of the Bluegrass and Volunteer states as they passed from war to peace, leaving farms, livelihoods, communities and families devastated by the movement of armies and the demands war had made upon them.

Opening with the legacy of the fall of the forts that the Confederates had hoped would safe-guard the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, *To the Battles of Franklin and Nashville and Beyond* follows the transition from an earlier period of warfare to a subsequent one in which the combatants became increasingly destructive. Inured to hardship and deprivation by the impact of the armies or their corollary elements in their midst, the effect on civilians increased dramatically. These noncombatants adapted themselves to the shortages and dangers that threatened their security and well-being, while the warriors grappled with the complex demands of supply and loyalty to their rear. Guerrilla activity plagued all, a point which the author demonstrates well, and required stringent measures by Federal authorities to counteract. These measures, in turn, alienated those caught up by them who would otherwise have remained neutral, if not loyal, themselves. Cooling assesses these complications and complexities through his analysis, supported by ample anecdotal evidence. Much of the best

material in the book relates to this part of the story.

The volume illustrates the ways in which Kentuckians and Tennesseans, and citizens within the various sections of those states, experienced the conflict in differing manners that nevertheless contained the common elements of the disruption of lives, the disintegration of slavery, and the unnerving blend of warfare and lawlessness away from the action that took place on the major battlefields. Cooling captures this sense of a seemingly unceasing home-front violence that matched in personal intensity, if it did not actually surpass, the larger and more dramatic scale of bloodletting that occurred in locations like Franklin and Nashville.

This work offers an examination of the warfare that swept across the landscape. The author highlights the cavalry raids that slashed railroads and depots, threatened garrisons and outposts, and deprived civilians of their food, fodder and animals, in addition to the set-piece battles. He also chronicles the myriad efforts, particularly by Federal authorities, at implementing "stabilization and reconstruction" for the people these Union and state officials encountered or were responsible for governing and potentially providing protection and assistance.

For all of its strengths, the text bogs down periodically, weighted by unnecessary repetition and organizational choppiness, especially concerning numerous parenthetical asides that appear frequently throughout and that are not always clear. Dauntingly, textual errors crop up wherein names that appear accurately in the index do not do so in the body of the volume. These range from references to rather significant figures like "Joseph [Edmund] Kirby Smith" and "James B. Longstreet" (perhaps confused with the literary Georgian and champion of secession, Augustus Baldwin Longstreet) to lesser-known, but important ones to the region such as "Adam [Abraham] Buford" and "John [James] Chalmers," as well as prominent waterways like the "Holstein [Holston] River" (10, 132, 170, 42, 43). Such errors may only distract readers familiar with the area or the individuals involved, but nevertheless detract from what might be a more polished final product.

The author also occasionally indulges in problematic speculation, such as when he attempts to determine if Nathan Bedford Forrest's raid on Memphis in August 1 occurred despite the Confederate leader's possible misgivings at disturbing the "benefits" of contraband trading "for a starving southern civilian

populace." Cooling's second assumption that the operation "may have remained simply military and psychological" was undoubtedly much closer to the mark for a commander desperate to turn a determined foe back from scorching the Mississippi breadbasket (p. 170).

To the Battles of Franklin and Nashville and Beyond builds on the work Benjamin Franklin Cooling has previously undertaken in portraying the ebb and flow of the Civil War across the western border that existed east of the Mississippi River between the United States and the Confederacy. The volume adds a fuller understanding of the impact of war and the prospects for peace in a region that remained volatile with regard to Federal efforts at conquest, stabilization and reconstruction. Most interesting were the differences Cooling identified between policies and practices found in a Kentucky that never left the Union, but included ostensibly loyal slaveholders, and a Tennessee that seceded, but embraced areas of profound Unionist sentiment. Immediate reconciliation would have been difficult under any circumstances, but in the context of the warfare that beset this area was bound to be harder to achieve, even in the wake of Confederate battlefield defeat and amidst an atmosphere of profound war weariness. Particularly with regard to the ways in which people in Kentucky and Tennessee experienced the conflict that engulfed them, Cooling's latest volume brings this examination to its conclusion, and in the process, makes a significant contribution to Civil War literature.

Brian Steel Wills is Director of the Center for the Study of the Civil War Era and Professor of History at Kennesaw State University. He is the author of works on Confederate cavalry general Nathan Bedford Forrest and Union general George Henry Thomas.